

A message from Congressman Edwards on Health Care

Congressman Edwards believes we must maintain our quality health care system in the United States while reducing costs and ensuring that all hardworking families have access to affordable coverage.

Congressman Edwards has fought to ensure coverage for children of working families and our senior citizens. Chet is a member of the Rural Healthcare Caucus, and works to make certain that those living in rural areas have access to the providers and specialists that they need. He has cosponsored pieces of health care legislation during the 111th Congress that would: increase the number of primary care physicians across the United States, ensure that patients at long term care facilities are being treated by qualified caregivers, and more.

Congressman Edwards will oppose any single-payer plan that socializes our health care system or prevents people from keeping the quality private health care plan of their choice. Lowering costs, maintaining competition and choice, and preserving quality health care are his top priorities.

Congressman Edwards also believes that the current health care system is financially unsustainable; fast-rising health care costs are hurting and even bankrupting many middle-income families and small businesses. The cost of insuring a family is growing at nearly four times the rate of wage increases. Under our current health care system, it is estimated that the average Texas family will pay \$24,000 annually for health care by 2016. That would be an astounding 51% of the average Texas family income.

The fact that 46 million Americans, over 18% of our population, lack basic health insurance is a serious problem and one that is growing worse every day. The large number of uninsured puts a burden on those who do have health insurance. Texas has the highest percentage of uninsured persons of any state in the nation, with over 25% of Texans lacking health care. Those without coverage are more likely to utilize expensive care in emergency rooms, driving

up the price of health insurance coverage for everyone, which is why Congressman Edwards believes that it is important to provide affordable coverage for all Americans. Every Texas family, on average, pays an additional \$1,800 in insurance premiums each year to cover the treatment costs for uninsured Americans.

Congressman Edwards believes that any health reform plan must help small businesses and the self-employed such as farmers, ranchers and realtors reduce their excessive health insurance premiums; help families with spouses or children with pre-existing conditions get health care at reasonable prices; lower prescription drug prices for Americans that are far higher than prices charged in other countries; and reduce the number of uninsured going to hospital emergency rooms for primary care, which can be ten times more expensive than visiting a family physician.

During the month of August, Congressman Edwards had 28 health care meetings in our district where he listened to physicians, nurses, hospital administrators, small business owners and everyday citizens. In addition, Congressman Edwards held a telephone town hall meeting on health care that included nearly 20,000 constituents, and had public town halls in Bryan, Waco and Cleburne that were attended by over 3000 people. Congressman Edwards learned a great deal about the strengths and challenges of our present health care system and the questions about proposed health care reform. While constituents had widely differing perspectives, it seemed to Congressman Edwards there was a consensus on several key points. Congressman Edwards realizes any reform plan would have to maintain the many positive aspects of America's health care system, and preserve:

- patients' choice of doctors
- quality care provided by our health care providers
- modern, effective technology
- wide range of private health insurance options
- the ability for those presently insured to continue their existing insurance plans if they are satisfied with them.

As this debate continues, Congressman Edwards is committed to listening to the concerns of families, doctors, hospitals, and businesses in our district to determine the best solution to the problems facing our health care system. He believes we must work together in good faith to protect the many positive aspects of our present health care system while addressing the unsustainable health care cost increases that are hurting American families and businesses alike.

In discussing health care reform, the one question Chet is asked more than any other is,

"Where can I get some basic facts about health reform legislation in Congress?" Some credible and objective sources include:

A brief overview of the bill that came out of committee and does not reflect changes made in the committee amendment process can be found [here](#) .

[The Kaiser Family Foundation healthreform.kff.org](http://healthreform.kff.org)

[Library of Congress thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)

[The Annenberg School of Public Policy at the University of Pennsylvania factcheck.org](http://factcheck.org)

Telephone Town Hall

Listen to a recording of Congressman Edwards' telephone town hall meeting on health care that took place Thursday August 20th. There were 20,000 constituents participate from all twelve District 17 counties.

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)